

Make a Difference: Compost or Grass-cycle

Backyard composting your yard waste and grass-cycling are key to:

1. Reducing pollution;
2. Saving resources;
3. And having a healthy yard



Reduce Pollution

When grass clippings are blown into the street they enter the stormwater management system. These clippings increase the nitrogen levels in our streams killing wildlife by decreasing oxygen available.

Save Resources

Bagged grass clippings set out for curbside trash collection are sent to the Covanta Waste to Energy Facility. Burning grass clippings is inefficient and wastes a valuable organic material that could be used for making compost.

Healthy Yard

Grass-cycling is the natural and easy way to increase the nutrient content of your soil. Backyard composting is a free and easy way to create nature's nutrients for your garden or flower bed.

**Learn More Inside about How to
Backyard Compost and Grass-cycle!**

Learn More and Get Involved!

Northern Virginia Cooperative Extension

Ph: (703) 746-5544

<http://offices.ext.vt.edu/alexandria>

Master Gardeners

Ph: (703) 228-6400

www.mgnv.org

City of Alexandria Office of Environmental Quality

Ph: (703) 746-4065

www.alexandriava.gov/Environment

Solid Waste Division

Ph: (703) 746-4410

www.alexandriava.gov/SolidWaste

**Learn more about environmental
initiatives in the City!**

Eco-City Alexandria Initiative

www.alexandriava.gov/Eco-City

**Promoting healthy yards and a
healthy Alexandria!**

City of Alexandria
Department of Transportation &
Environmental Services



ECO-CITY  **ALEXANDRIA**

Backyard Composting in 4 Easy Steps

Composting can save you time and money, while providing you with a healthy and environmentally-friendly yard.

1. Choose or construct an appropriate bin for your compost.

Things to consider when choosing a bin:

- Yard size
- Types of materials being composted
- Ability to turn the compost pile

NOTE: If composting food scraps choose an enclosed container with a secure lid to avoid attracting unwanted animals or other pests.

2. Fill your bin with a balanced mixture:

❖ 50% Green stuff:

- Green leaves, clippings & plants
- Chicken, rabbit or pigeon manure
- Grass Clippings
- Fruit and Vegetable scraps
- Coffee grounds and Tea leaves.



❖ 50% Brown stuff:

- autumn leaves
- dead plants & weeds
- cardboard or paper towels
- sawdust



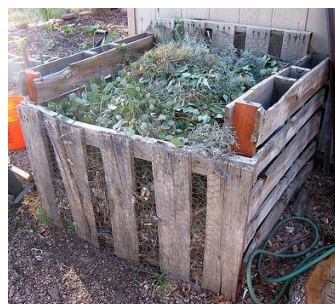
- **Water.** Your pile should remain about as damp as a sponge that has been wrung out.



Optional: a light sprinkling of garden soil or fresh compost between layers can help to start the compost cycle a little more quickly.

3. Layer or mix the different materials in your bin.

4. Turn your pile regularly, once every week or two.



What NOT to Compost

Avoid composting bread, pasta, nuts, cooked food, and newspaper. They don't break down very easily, become slimy.

Never compost the following items for reasons of health, hygiene and inability to break down:

- Meat, meat scraps, and bones
- Fish and fish bones
- Oil or fat
- Pet or human feces or cat litter
- Weeds that have gone to seed or Diseased plants
- Disposable diapers (nappies)
- Glossy magazines

For **Troubleshooting Tips**, visit: www.alexandriava.gov/recycling and click on 'Yard Waste Recycling' or call your local Master Gardeners chapter.

GrassCycle 101

1. Sharpen mower blades and remove bag
2. Cut no more than 1/3 of grass height to keep clippings small.
3. Leave the clippings on the lawn.
4. Mow every 4 to 10 days based on growth to keep clippings small.

Tips:

- If you need a new mower, consider a push mower or an electric mulching lawn mower.



- Mow the lawn when it's dry to avoid clumping.
- Water deeply, but infrequently. *If you have clay soil, it is better to water more frequently for a shorter period of time.*